

al., whether alone or in combination with Hirayama, fails to teach or suggest, *inter alia*, at least **three** supply sources of sterile air. On the contrary, Kelbrick et al. discloses, at most, two supplies of air. Specifically, Kelbrick et al. discloses a first air supply that atomizes sterilant at an elbow that is then distributed in a cabinet (Col. 2, line 7-13; Col. 4, lines 7-14). The only other supply of air disclosed in Kelbrick et al. is an application of hot air that completes the sterilization and drying (Col. 4, line 46-50; Col 6, line 50-57). Thus, claims 1, 11 and 21 are not anticipated by the combination of Kelbrick et al. in view of Hirayama, and the Examiner's rejection under 103(a) should be withdrawn.

Additionally, Hirayama of the combination fails to teach or suggest, *inter alia*, a "probe extending into an interior of a container for **applying the atomized sterilant** into the interior of the container". On the contrary, Hirayama discloses an apparatus for *removing*, via suction, remnants of sterilizer at a bottom of a formed carton (Page 1). Further, the lowering nozzle in Hirayama only removes the remaining sterilizer while it simultaneously applies *air*. In Hirayama, *aqueous* hydrogen peroxide is distributed prior to the use of said suctioning, lowering nozzle. Clearly, claims 1, 11 and 21 are not anticipated by the combination of Kelbrick et al. in view of Hirayama, and the Examiner's rejection under 103(a) should be withdrawn.

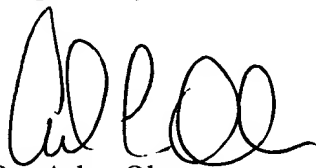
In light of the foregoing amendments and arguments, Applicants submit that dependent claims 2 - 10, are allowable as being dependent upon independent claim 1. Further, Applicants submit that dependent claims 12 - 20, are allowable as being dependent upon independent claim 11. Finally, Applicants submit that dependent claim 22 is allowable as being dependent upon independent claim 21.

Claims 3 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being anticipated by Kelbrick et

al. in view of Hirayama, and in further view of Muys et al. Muys et al. fails to remedy the glaring deficiencies in Kelbrick et al. and Hirayama set forth above.

In summary, based on the aforementioned arguments, none of the references cited by the Examiner nor any other known prior art, either alone or in combination, disclose the unique combination of features disclosed in Applicants' claims presently on file. Thus, Applicants respectfully submits that the entire application is in condition for allowance. However, should the Examiner believe anything further is necessary in order to place the application in better condition for allowance, or if the Examiner believes that a telephone interview would be advantageous to resolve the issues presented, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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